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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

NOV 6 '79

A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

Issue #97
October 1979

PROCUREMENT SECTION
CURRENT RECORDS

FY 1978 PRODUCTIVITY DATA.....The Department has just received FY 1978 productivity indexes and other data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The productivity index (output-per-employee-year) for the 63,000 directly measured USDA employee years increased by 1.3% from the FY 1977 base. However, when the approximately 27,000 related non-measured and indirect support employee years are included, the index falls by 0.8% over this period. The agency indexes are now being sent to Assistant Secretaries and Agency Heads. (Contact: Ken Hatch, MS, ext. 79895)

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR HANDICAPPED EMPLOYEES.....Following the presentation on affirmative programs for the handicapped to the Management Council Conference in Williamsburg, the Department has moved forward to implement some of the ideas that were discussed. A USDA Advisory Committee on Handicapped Employees has been established to plan and assess the affirmative action programs for handicapped personnel, assist in recruiting the handicapped and to make recommendations on accessibility. This committee will work closely with the Federal Executive Board's Handicapped Subcommittee, the Veterans Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation and other community based organizations to insure a potential source of qualified handicapped employees.

The Department is preparing a request to GSA to implement specific measures such as installing a ramp on the Jefferson Drive side of the Administration Building, and ramps for the South Building and the Auditor's Building. In addition, the Department is requesting accessible restrooms, water fountains and telephones on each floor of each building and braille or raised letters on elevator buttons. (Contact: Perry Tillman, O&F, 472-4305)

TRAINING FOR PROCUREMENT REPRESENTATIVES.....Individuals designated as agency procurement representatives will have the opportunity to be trained in the requirements imposed by a recent amendment to the Small Business Act (P. L. 95-507). The Department's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) is sponsoring a 1½ day pilot workshop on October 30 and 31 for key procurement representatives and program managers who are located in the Washington area. Secretary Bergland will make the opening address at a ceremony in the patio on October 30 and Assistant Secretaries and Administrators have been invited to attend.

Training sessions for field personnel are planned for Kansas City on November 27 and 28 and San Francisco on December 4 and 5. The Kansas City dates are a change from those previously announced in recent correspondence to agencies. (Contact: Stella Hughes, OSDBU, ext. 77117)

NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS ACT OF 1979.....The latest development in the move to establish a new approach to Federal printing appears in H.R.5424, the National Publication Act of 1979, that is now before the Committee on House Administration. This bill would establish an independent National Publications Agency (NPA) in the Executive Branch to take the place of the Government Printing Office (GPO). The bill includes the following provisions:

- The Joint Committee on Printing (JCP) would be abolished.
- The Freedom of Information Act, the Administrative Procedures Act and the Privacy Act would apply to the new agency. They do not apply to the GPO.
- Regulations would be developed to provide for competitive bids for amounts of \$10,000 or more and negotiated bids for less than \$10,000. Exceptions would be made for small and minority businesses.
- A 10 member National Publications Commission would be established. Three members representing the House and Senate Administration Committee and OMB would be nonvoting. Of the seven part-time voting members, four would represent the printing and reproduction industries, organized labor, the library community and the publishing and information industries. Three would be chosen from other sources.
- Provisions of Title 44 "Public Printing and Documents" would be subject to adoption or change.
- Each Executive Branch agency would have an "information resources manager" to head up all printing and distribution. This individual "shall report directly to, and be under the direction of, the head of the agency and not under the control of, or subject to supervision by any other person."
- The NPA would review all existing plants and make a determination whether they could continue in operation and what they could print. All waivers and regulations of the JCP would expire one year after the date of the Act which is scheduled for January 1, 1981.

The chances for passage of this Bill look good in the House. At this point, it is difficult to measure Senate reactions. (Contact: Claude Gifford, GPA, ext. 78005)

USDA DAY CARE CENTER.....A task force was convened in January to conduct a survey to measure the interest of USDA employees in utilizing an on-site child care center located in the USDA complex. The results of this survey show that almost 250 employees expressed an interest. Based on these results, a study was undertaken which indicated that a center was feasible. GSA was then requested to provide space in the Auditor's Building for use as a day care center.

A non-profit corporation, the USDA Child Care Center, Inc., has been established to provide an on-site day care center. The center will operate on a fee basis and will serve children in the 2-5 year range. At this point, no fees have been set. The corporation is making progress but there is much still to be done. (Contact: Edwardene Rees, MS, ext. 76983)

AGE DISCRIMINATION IN FEDERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.....The Age Discrimination Act prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age in Federal Assistance Programs became effective on July 1. Complaints alleging discrimination in USDA Federal assistance programs are now referred by OEO to the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). It is vitally important that all age discrimination program complaints received in the field be forwarded to OEO as soon as possible since the FMCS has only 60 days from the date of filing to attempt mediation. Regulations for implementing the Age Discrimination Act in the USDA are being drafted and will be published in the Federal Register. (Contact: Carolyn Moore, OEO, est. 75114)

ACQUISITION OF FUEL-EFFICIENT LIGHT TRUCKS.....The General Services Administration (GSA) is in the process of revising Federal Property Management Temporary Regulation (FPMR)G-39, "Acquisition of Fuel-Efficient Light Trucks by the Federal Government."

Under this FPMR for fiscal year 1980, the fleet average fuel economy standards have been set at 16 mpg on 4x2 and 14 mpg on 4x4 light trucks. At the same time, the Gross Vehicle Weight Ratings (GVWR) have been raised from 6,000 to 8,500 pounds. Some agencies in the Department with special mission requirements will have difficulty meeting these standards.

The Department is requesting GSA to include the following exemptions in the revised FPMR G-39:

- All light trucks up to 8,500 GVWR which are used directly to support fire management activities at least one-third of the year. The required loads and mode of operation for these vehicles are of such magnitude as to require additional energy consuming optional equipment such as special engines and power trains.
- All light trucks up to 8,500 GVWR for which the primary purpose is to carry mounted equipment and/or for pulling, dipping vats, horse trailers, etc. The required load and mode of operation are of such magnitude as to require additional energy consuming optional equipment such as special engines and power trains.

The number of vehicles in this category within the Department is estimated to be 4,500 out of an owned fleet of 25,615 light trucks. (Contact: Tom Foster, O&F, ext. 73141)

DISPOSAL OF EXCESS FURNITURE.....Personnel of the O&F Personal Property Management Division removed furniture and other items illegally stored in the hallways and other unauthorized storage areas in the Administration, South, Auditors, Auditors West, Cotton Annex and the GHI Buildings during the week of September 17. The following week, these same buildings were monitored and it was found that items of furniture were still being placed in the halls.

When property is in excess to office needs, employees should contact their property offices and request the removal of the items. This will eliminate the placement of furniture in the halls where it results in serious violations of the building fire codes. This will also permit agency property personnel to reutilize the property elsewhere within the agency. Employees requiring furniture should contact Agency Property Personnel to determine if items of furniture are available from excess before new procurements are requested.

When an agency cannot reutilize items of property within their own organization, such property is to be reported and delivered to the Department Excess Property Pool. Needed property items also can be requested from the Excess Property Pool.

Items that cannot be reutilized within the Department (D.C. area) are reported to GSA as being excess to our needs. The GSA periodically advises all other Departments, Bureaus and Agencies of the availability of these items. When no other Federal entity has a need for declared excess property, GSA declares the items as surplus and disposes of them by donation to state surplus agencies. If any surplus items remain, GSA sells the residue via established bid procedures. (Contact: Walter Fox, O&F, ext. 74321)

UPDATE ON THE CIVIL SERVICE REFORM ACT.....A Civil Service Reform Act Implementation Group has been set up formally in the Office of Personnel to focus on the impact of the Act in this Department. The Group provides support to the Departmental Executive Resources Boards and Performance Review Boards, and develops policies and procedures in areas such as performance appraisal, merit pay, and executive development. A panel of Agency Heads from FNS, APHIS, FS, FmHA, AMS and FAS, chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Administration, serves as a Steering Committee.

On Monday, October 1, 1979, members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) began to perform under the USDA Performance Appraisal System. Over 300 SES members received formal training in the new system during August and September. SES members are required to have written performance requirements with critical elements identified for Fiscal Year 1980. Results achieved will be reviewed by Departmental Performance Review Boards after the Fiscal Year. They will recommend to the Secretary the final ratings, rewards, and retentions.

On the same date, the first meeting of the Secretary's Executive Resources Board, chaired by the Deputy Secretary, was held. This Board is composed of the chairpersons of the nine program Executive Resources Boards. The new merit staffing process for the Senior Executive Service was presented and discussed. The Senior Executive Service is a separate statutory personnel system with its own set of regulations. In addition, the Board reviewed proposals for the Department's executive development activities.

The SES Candidate Development Program will be announced during November 1979. The program has been submitted to the Office of Personnel Management for approval. Plans are to select competitively the first 30 candidates by the end of January 1980. Candidates selected will undergo a series of development experiences over a 12 to 18 month period while working in their present assignment. Upon completion of the developmental cycle, candidates would receive consideration for a specific SES vacancy or be placed in a "highly qualified pool" for up to two years. The managerial (executive) qualifications of program graduates will not have to be submitted to OPM for approval.

On October 12, 1979, a work group will be convened to develop a results-oriented performance appraisal and merit pay system for the Department. Agency and department managers and personnel specialists, including representatives from selected field locations, will participate in the process. A new system is expected to be presented to the Office of Personnel Management by March 31, 1980, for approval. It would be effective for Fiscal Year 1981.

In line with the intent of the Civil Service Reform Act, labor-management relations in the Department have been decentralized further. On August 28, 1979, the Department Personnel Manual was revised to reflect the results of extensive deliberations by the Department, agencies and employee groups. (Contact: Jack Carson, OP, ext. 72830)